Postsecondary Awareness, Outreach and Aspirations: Working with Rural Students in Alaska
Lessons from the Alaska College & Career Advising Corps
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- Three models for working with Rural Students
  - Rural “on the road system”
    - Nikiski Middle/High School
  - Rural “off the road system”
    - Bethel Regional High School
    - Kodiak High School
    - Kodiak Village Schools
  - Distance–based
    - Seward High School
    - New school (TBD)
What is this thing...“college”?

- Lack of persons/role models in their life who have gone to college
- Only people who have are teachers and doctors
- Lack of understanding of options and opportunities
- Need for career exploration and goal setting
Go to college and never return...

- Perception that when someone leaves for college, they do not return.
- Many do not see a connection between college and how it can apply to life in a rural, village setting.
- No real understanding of different postsecondary options.
RELATIONSHIP IS CRITICAL

- Must be consistent, reliable and mutual
- Developing trust and credibility is key
  - Must focus on group work at start
  - One-to-one develops as level of trust increases
- Cannot be exclusive to “going to college”
  - must include relationship-building and an interest in them
  - Be present for “life”… sports, evening events, drama, concerts, etc.
It takes a village... literally

- Must engage not only student, but immediate and extended family as well as the community
- Emphasis on how student can grow and return to community
- Developing trust with community can be a key
- Engaging college “role models” from community is essential
Activities

- College/Career Activity Of the Month
- College & Career Exploration Lunch Series
- March Madness College Search Competition
- Legacy Profiles
- College & Career Ambassadors Program
- Distance: VTC or Skype “Talk Show”
Other Outreach Strategies
Community Outreach

- In-person and distance-delivered presentations & workshops
- Statewide programs with local coordinators
  - AKCIS
  - CGA
  - IKIC
  - K2C
Lessons Learned

- Rural students attuned to the “coming & going” of outsiders – in person-visits appreciated, but true relationship development with students not likely
  - Demonstrating true interest/familiarity helps:
    - Appropriate attire (not overdressing, but not blatantly “dressing down”)
    - Proper pronunciation of place names; knowledge of prevalent culture(s)
    - Asking questions and expressing interest in learning more
  - Sharing personal information helps:
    - Short family background as part of introduction
    - Using personal anecdotes, especially those that are relatable (but always real)
Lessons Learned

- Development of strong, personal relationship with a local coordinator/contact is critical:
  - Helps select best date, time, and venue
  - Conducts word-of-mouth and other locality-specific advertising, recruits attendees
  - Sets tone and expectation for event
  - Models attitude towards presented content and information

- Best local coordinators are those that have lived in the community for some time and have established personal credibility and relationships

- In-person visits appreciated but distance-delivered information can also be effective with strong local coordinator support